

## **AHWAR OF SOUTHERN IRAQ IN THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST:HOW THE PROTECTION WITH LACK OF NATIONAL LAW AND LEGISLATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Ahwar, Southern Iraq marshlands, after all, inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of four criteria of UN's culture agency the UNESCO. The Ahwar are one of the world's most important freshwater ecosystems situated within an extremely arid environment. In general, it is a Refuge of Biodiversity and the Relict Landscape of the southern Mesopotamia cities. The Ahwar currently consists of seven sites, three Sumerian cities, Uruk, Ur and Tell Eridu archaeological sites, which are still incompletely explored. In addition to four wetland areas, Huwaizah, Central, East Hammar and West Hammar Mesopotamian Marshes. Geologically, Multiple factors played roles in the Ahwar genesis, the most important are tectonic activities, climate, hydrology, precipitation, and changes in sea level. Its formation evidence indicates that they were started when the Arabian Gulf water receded Southwards from the late stage of alpine orogeny and ended with the late Pliocene to early Pleistocene eras.*

*Iraqi Government, in the fifteenth of the twentieth century began gradually draining the Ahwar to create profitable farmland and for oil exploration. The drainage re-started with increasing rate at the beginning of the ninetieth and caused a damage to the environment of the marshlands.*

*Therefore, authorities must take serious efforts toward a new legal systems for protection and sustainable development. The only correct way led to the successful strategy contains many steps. First, we need to reformulating the already existing local laws and legislations acting in Iraq. Second, to passes new laws and legislations toward protection and development. Third, the new laws and legislations must include serious enforcement mechanism or system of sanctions. Forth, is the local and international partnerships with similar organizations dealing with the heritage protection. Fifth, training and mentoring the limited technical, cultural and legal experience and capacity of the Iraqi Expert teams. Sixth, Iraq government must supports the Heritage Convention and assure to support before and after the nomination. Seventh is the creation of a National Committee to follow-up issues related to World Heritage, nature and culture.*

*The Iraqi laws and legislations of antiquities and heritage are protecting the archeological sites, but nothing regardless the Ahwar marshlands. Although, there are lack of security in the country which affected several aspects of the nomination preparation and most sites suffered limited and reversible damages during the recent conflict, but efforts are toward promoting more "sites" on the World Heritage List before finally lost forever.*

**Keywords:** Ahwar, Iraq, UNESCO, world heritage, archaeology.